

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting  
Department of Community & Culture  
September 23, 2008  
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

***Refugee Advisory Board Members Present:*** Palmer DePaulis, Gerald Brown, Zaw Than Htike, Patrick Poulin, Michael Gallegos, Lina Smith, Lew Miller, Marty Kelly (for Brenda Hales), David Everitt, Manual Romero (for Lisa-Michele Church), Macleans Geo Ja-Ja, and Amadou Niang (for Saran Aisha Nahas)

***Excused:*** Aden Batar

***Other Attendees:*** James Whitaker, Laura Durrant, Yolanda Francisco-Nez, Annette Babisz and Mary Gehman-Smith

**Welcome and Opening Business**

Palmer welcomed the group and introductions were made. He called for approval of the 28 August 2008 meeting minutes. The minutes were accepted as posted.

**Dialogue on Discrimination Series**

Yolanda Francisco-Nez presented *Dialogue on Discrimination*, a series hosted by the Salt Lake City Mayor's Office of Diversity and Human Rights. *Dialogue on Discrimination* is a series of town hall meetings that will encourage community involvement in developing a non-discrimination ordinance based on constituent input and factual evidence compiled through research. On October 23, 2008, Mayor Ralph Becker and a panel of discrimination experts will announce Series of 5 dates, times and locations. Speakers are currently being selected.

Palmer DePaulis stated the Refugee Advisory Board will take a proactive position in distributing this information.

**Refugee Services Office (RSO) Web Site**

Mary Gehman-Smith navigated the group through the new RSO website [www.jobs.utah.gov/refugee](http://www.jobs.utah.gov/refugee).

The group made the following suggestions:

- Division of Adult & Aging Services needs to be linked under the Department of Human Services;
- All ESL programs need to be included under *Learn English*;
- Designees will be added to the Refugee Advisory Council Membership Matrix;
- The RSO website should be oriented to refugees. The DWS banners & flags can be confusing;
- Add Calendar of Events. This will allow refugee communities to advertise their events;
- Juvenile Justice link currently goes to a Public Information Officer. It should go to someone who can answer questions related to refugees;
- There needs to be a separate block for community partners such as Salt Lake Muslim;
- Include Working Group documents;
- List MAA's and what countries they represent;

The group will review the website further and provide input to Mary Gehman-Smith.

James Whitaker will work with the DWS Webmaster to determine if there is designing flexibility to allow a focus on refugees.

#### Refugee Volunteer On-Line Training Module

- Laura Durrant presented the proposed Volunteer Training module available at <http://www.refugeenetwork.org/training/> and accessible through the DWS website. The way the current training is set up, it should take about five hours. The group suggested a training that is less time consuming for those who can't commit to five hours. They would like to see core issues addressed first, with educational information second. There are many volunteers out there but few have been trained. For many reasons, active recruitment has not taken place. Dr. Geo Ja-Ja feels volunteers are needed immediately;
- Patrick Poulin reported IRC's volunteer training lasts between 90 minutes and two hours. The RSO training is comprehensive but is not intended to supplant resettlement agency training. How IRC and CCS train is specific to their respective agencies.

Dr. Geo Ja-Ja recommended the Refugee Advisory Board approve a timeline for the volunteers to be recruited, trained, and in place. Gerald Brown reported by January 1, 2009, certified volunteers will be connected with case managers.

The group will review the Volunteer Training module and provide feedback.

#### Refugee Services Office Operational Issues

Gerald Brown will prepare a Director's report for each Board meeting. This report will remain on file, in addition to the Minutes, and be considered when annual reports are compiled and sent to the Governor and Mayor.

Gerald's report included information on the following:

- The use of incoming Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds, redirected to support case management, has been tentatively approved by the DWS Executive Director's office;
- Work continues on the draft contract for providers managing case management for new arrivals for two years;
- The upcoming Utah Refugee Conference will be held November 14-15, 2008. Bishop John Wester has been invited to keynote;
- RSO interpreters will be joining refugee service organizations to continue to assist the Karen and Burmese refugee communities;
- RSO plans to hire a Burundi case worker temporarily to assist that community;
- RSO staff met with approximately 45 members of the Burundi community to discuss problems and wishes of the community;
- RSO staff met with homeless advocates to explain the housing problems facing refugees;
- RSO staff traveled to Logan to meet with community and government stakeholders about the migration of refugees to the North Region;
- Work continues on the RSO website and volunteer web training;
- Contracts for Targeted Assistance, Refugee Social Services, Pandemic Preparedness, and School Impact, and ESL were finalized for the coming Federal fiscal year.

Dr. Geo Ja-Ja requested clarification of TANF funds and expressed concern regarding their redirection. He asked if the RSO is duplicating services of

the AAU and resettlement agencies. At future meetings, he would like the RSO Director to report on what has been done to solve the Governor's issues. He continued it is the resettlement agencies' responsibility to provide case managers, therefore why is the RSO going to provide case management?

Gerald Brown responded that some believe CCS and IRC are responsible for refugees for six months and then the case is transferred to AAU who is responsible after that. The resettlement organizations do not have funding to assist refugees for six months except in the case of Match Grant enrollees. AAU tries to serve refugees that are referred by the resettlement organizations, post six months, but has no reliable funding to do so. The Department of State pays for nesting services for 30 days. RSO gives social services money to schools and agencies for certain services. He feels the current system is broken and his job is to fix it. Amadou Niang stated he believes more case managers are needed and so they should be provided.

Patrick Poulin added services should be provided based on refugee needs not what the contracts state.

### Committee Reports

#### Fundraising - Lew Miller

- The Fundraising Committee is in the development stage. At the last meeting, recommendations were requested. Potential sources of funding are being identified;
- Palmer added a grant from American Express has been awarded which will be used to hire a grant writer. Once this grant writer is in place, they will serve on the Housing Committee.

#### Housing - Mike Gallegos

- More than a year ago, the Salt Lake County Housing Committee was formed to discuss long-term solutions to housing issues. There is a shortage of affordable housing along the Wasatch front and not enough public and private sector funding. There are many refugees arriving into our communities who lack education on housing and landlord/tenant information;

- Surveys indicate some refugees need long term housing. The Housing Committee is looking at developing a 40-60-unit housing project, complete with a welcome center, which could be used for activities and would provide a meeting place for service providers. The Committee is looking for a 5-7 acre site with a cost of about \$7M and want to accomplish this without public support. A small group has worked on this and has decided to raise funds for this project. Feelers have been put out.
- It has been suggested that \$10M be raised which would mean a \$3M endowment meaning little or no cost to the tenants in this housing project until they could get on their feet;
- Due to the stock market, it may be difficult to get foundations to donate;
- Palmer added The Housing Committee unanimously approved bringing their Committee into this process;
- Palmer suggested Michael Gallegos present at the next meeting what this housing center would mean, the welcoming center.

Michael Gallegos motioned that the Refugee Advisory Board adopt providing support to the Housing Committee and endorse the concept of a housing center and to seek funding options. Amadou Niang seconded the motion and the motion carried.

- Michael continued the area of emergency housing needs resources. This could act as a bridge until refugees can get on Section 8. Gerald feels allocations for tenant-based rental assistance is just as important;
- Lina stated FEMA used to provide funds for emergency motels. This has saved the lives of many;

Patrick Poulin added, as a second part of this motion, the SL County Housing Committee move ahead with the tenant-based rental assistance, Lina Smith seconded the motion and the motion carried.

#### Education Committee - Marty Kelly

Marty reported she and Gerald have met and are moving ahead on the Education Committee.

### Health Committee

Teresa Garrett has suggested to Gerald she has another person who will better serve as the leader of the Health committee.

Gerald and Palmer will work on both the Education and Health Committees.

### Evaluation Discussion

- Palmer DePaulis proposed that an oversight and evaluation be performed on how refugee services are being provided. He feels for an evaluation to be effective, it needs to come from an independent source, someone with auditing experience who can objectively look at the issues. He has an independent individual in mind, willing to volunteer their time. He asked the group for support to further pursue this;
- James Whitaker stated the Refugee Advisory Board needs to be clear on what they will be evaluated on before bringing someone in to evaluate. He believes we need to establish the direction we are going. James added we need to ask what we are measuring, what are we looking for? They have to be identified;
- Gerald reported that we should wait to get the volunteer training and case management going in January, and for all new arrivals get a volunteer and case manager and then, six months later, evaluate the service on new arrivals. The timing is crucial;
- Palmer stated it will take almost a month to get an evaluator on board. Michael asked whether we are evaluating the system or the people. Palmer added statistical tracking is needed as stats tell the story for funding purposes.

Dr. Geo Ja-Ja motioned to begin the process to bring in an evaluator, while discussion continues. Michael Gallegos seconded the motion and the motion carried.